PROLOGUES

1509/780

And

EPILOGUES,

WRITTEN FOR THE

L. D. T.

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

1797—8—9.

———It is nothing, nothing in the world,
Unleſs you can find ſport in their intents.

SHAKESPEARE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
15 JUL 52

TO

S. STREATFEILD, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

I will venture to ſay, that every member of our little Theatre ſhall approve of the dedication of theſe pieces to yourſelf, and unite with me in acknowleding the kindneſs of your countenance and ſupport.

We have to thank you, ſir, for overcoming a prejudice againſt theatricals, and drawing a limit which has preſerved the *L. D. T.* from the fear of any unpleaſant imputation. The ſimple manner in which your Laundry was adapted to our purpoſe and the privacy of our performances, obviated every objection that could be made on account of their expence, and the principal charges that are urged againſt the ſtudy of the Drama as a relaxation, the licentiouſneſs of the beſt comedies, on the one hand, and the romantic ideas inculcated, on the other, could not effect us; our only attempt

in

in ſentiment was to inſpire benevolence, and your plaudits were not beſtowed on the bewitching libertiniſm of Congreve or Vanbrugh. But this vindication will be thought ſuperfluous, when it is remembered, that our ſociety was not entirely compoſed of ſchool-boys or ſuch enthuſiaſts as myſelf. The ſanction we received juſtifies the preſumption, that, when our little circle ſhall be diſperſed and your children engaged in more important parts on life's great ſtage, they will with pleaſure call to mind the innocent amuſements of Long Ditton.

With regard to the following trifles, they need no apology, the applauſe, which attended their delivery, has ſtampt their character.

I am,

Your very affectionate Son,

T. S.

BRITISH MUSEUM 15 62 JUL

PROLOGUES & EPILOGUES.

EPILOGUE TO THE GUARDIAN,

Spoken by MISS HARRIET ARBUTHNOT, *January* 7, 1797.

T. LANGLEY.

UPON my word, good folks—is this your way?
What—won't you let me have one little ſay?
This is our cruſty *Guardian's* whim, for certain,
That I'm excluded from behind the curtain!
The little gentleman, with ſelfiſh pride,
When I propos'd to act, thus peeviſh cried,
"Poh! Nonſenſe! She pretend to act, Lord bleſs her!
"How can ſhe ſqueeze around the *Laundry Dreſſer?*
"My ſkill, if ſhe is by, I ne'er can ſhew,
"She'll mar my powers by ſome unlucky blow."
His powers, forſooth, fit for *Gir Gilbert Pumpkin*,
For *Little Iſaac* or for *Tony Lumpkin*.
My ſiſter too, for *Harriet* is too airy;
She'd better feed her ducks, and mind her dairy.
The jaunty air, indeed, of little BET
Juſt fits the ſlippance of the pert *Soubrette*.
Sir Charles is humour'd to the life by SPEIDELL,
And WILL has charm'd me—but, 'twill make him idle.
Well, notwithſtanding you have us'd me ſo,
I'll ſay one friendly word before I go.

Amidſt

Amidſt the feelings *Harriet*'s cares excite,
Do not forget the real HARRIET quite;
Still may you, all of you, of every age,
Perform a pleaſing part on Nature's ſtage,
And be my part, in every act, to prove
A friend's affection and a ſiſter's love.

EPILOGUE TO THE GUARDIAN.

Spoken by MRS. LANGLEY *in the Character of Harriet, January* 1, 1798.

T. LANGLEY.

"VARIOUS the ſtations of the ſcenic art
"Since Father Theſpis ſpouted from his cart;"
For, not in ſplendid Theatres alone
The Muſes hold their court and raiſe their throne:
Our ſtage-ſtruck manager, in all his fury,
Sighs not for Covent-Garden or Old Drury,
But here a humble Theatre can raiſe,
And change a *Laundry* with a little baize.
High on an *ironing-board* you're plac'd, whilſt here,
Freſh from the *ſuds*, poor ſimple I appear.
Why all this nonſenſe pray from me require?
I've got too many *irons in the fire.*
Quite *ſtarch'd* and *blued* with all this noiſe and pucker,
Methinks I feel like *Nurſe's Sunday tucker.*
Well, if we've *mangled* what we juſt have ended,
You know this place for *mangling* was intended;

Yet,

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Yet, ſure, ſome little ſkill has been diſplay'd,
For SHEPHEARD *clapp'd* like any *laundry-maid*.
My young allies, alarm'd leſt ills befal 'em,
Have ſent me forth to ſpeak theſe what-d'ye-call-em.
If in or out this houſe, ſome anxious friend
Sees many dangers on our mirth attend,
Dreads that the world into our ſports may enter,
That little world of which we form the centre,
Blame not our feſtive pleaſantries, nor fear
That aught but innocence can harbour here:
Behind theſe ſcenes, my *Heartly* would oppoſe
His vet'ran energies to virtue's foes,
Check each wild ardor, watch the leaſt alarm,
And ſhield unwary youth from every harm.
Before the curtain ſee what guards ariſe,
What well-known, valued forms attract my eyes!
Parents alive to every op'ning pow'r
And Friends delighted by this chearful hour,
The real HARRIET too who 'midſt our band,
Gave to our early ſcene a helping hand,
And he whoſe leſſons fondly we attend,
Sworn foe to vice and virtue's ardent friend.
Whilſt ſuch approve our harmleſs, guiltleſs plan,
" We fear no ill, and pity thoſe who can."

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE TO THE JEW.

January 3, 1799.

– T. STREATFEILD.

AMIDST more ſerious thoughts, more noble views,
Each frames ſome ſcheme, ſome darling whim purſues.
The Patriot Orator, warm from the debate,
The cloſe of which decides his country's fate,
A thoughtleſs reſpite ſeeks, and in a trice,
Puſhes the bottle round, or hurls the dice.
Gownſmen from ſolid argument repair,
And joy to build their caſtles in the air.
Each has his hobby, and the Cynic too,
Deviates in private, though he ſnarls at you.
Happy is he with worldly cares oppreſt,
Who finds his ſolace in his own pure breaſt,
Who in the ſocial circle can rejoice,
Unmov'd by faſhion's faſcinating voice.
Let thoſe to foreign aid, to opiates fly,
Who ne'er have known domeſtic harmony.
Hoping to find a friendly circle here,
We ſeek not flattery, but we feel no fear,
Aſſured the entertainment we preſent
You will interpret as by us 'tis meant,
To cheer our circle, to excite ſome jeſt,
Perchance, a Chriſtmas gambol at the beſt;
A relaxation which we all require,
Partaken here inſtead of round the fire,

Harmleſs,

Harmleſs, and, could we hope to touch the heart,
Some uſeful leſſon likely to impart,
To huſh blind prejudice, dry the ſuff'rers tears,
And ſhield the outcaſt from unmanly ſneers.
This is our Author's moral. We purſue
His generous theme, and dread no frowns from you.

EPILOGUE TO THE JEW,

Spoken by MRS. LANGLEY *and* MR. N. GARRY, *in the Characters of Dorcas and Jabal, January* 3, 1799.

T. LANGLEY

Dorcas. COME Jabal, now our maſter's gift we'll ſhare,
And chat awhile, and take our homely fare.
Here, pick this herring; there's an onion warming.
Jabal. Oh, how delicious! Bleſs my ſtars, how charming!
This nice ſalt-butter, how it oils my leather!
Dorcas. There's nothing like it to keep out the weather.
Jabal. 'Twill make me dry tho'! *Dorcas,* Never mind my lad,
There's ſome ſmall beer. *Jabal. (drinks)* 'Tis not ſo very bad!
Come here's my maſter; he's a good old Jew.
Dorcas. Give me the mug, come, here's *Sir Stephen* too.
Jabal. Ah, mother Dorcas, you're as deep as Newgate:
Not in this houſe thoſe plump round cheeks did you get.
Where did you learn to cook? I know your tricks;
Without ſome ſtraw you never could make bricks.

Sir Stephen's pantry.—*Dorcas.* Huſh, good Jabal, pray,
I've known *Sir Stephen* in a civil way.
Jabal. Ah, mother, you've had many a greaſy chin,
While I've been ſtarving in an empty ſkin,
Feeding on Hebrew, meat nor moiſture knowing
Whilſt merrily your fat old chops were going.
Dorcas. Well Jabal, hold, and don't be ſo voracious,
Sir Stephen and our Jew are now quite gracious.
What if I take you to *Sir Stephen's?* there
At Chriſtmas I have known ſome decent fare.
Jabal, Will you? Oh, mercy! oh, the ſav'ry haſh,
Rich ſauces, calipee and calipaſh!
But, hold, if whilſt his victuals I am muncking,
Sir Stephen finds me out and ſpoils my luncheon?—
You know he's turn'd a captain. *Dorcas.* Peace you varlet.
Jabal. Oh dear, I've ſeen him all in green and ſcarlet!
Dorcas. Well, never fear, for you muſt underſtand,
I have the CAPTAIN under my command.
And now, to prove it, come with me, good Jabal,
We'll have a mug of ſtingo on the table;
And, 'ere our thirſty ſouls are quite ſupplied,
We'll drink the *Bertrams, Radcliffes,* and the *bride;*
Puſh round the nippakin, and ſtir the fire,
And toaſt Old *Sheva* and the DITTON SQUIRE.

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE TO THE ROAD TO RIDICULE,

Spoken by Mr. W. S. Streatfeild. *January* 9th, 1799.

T. Speidell.

WHY what can I tell them? 'Tis dev'liſh abſurd!
(Speaking behind the Scenes.)
T. Streatfeild. Oh, ſay what you pleaſe; you can ne'er want a word——
If you love me go on. *W. S.* Well well then; *(entering)* I come,
To ſpeak for a wight by your preſence ſtruck dumb.
Who tells me, whene'er I would rally his fears,
Where he meant to raiſe laughter, he dreads to raiſe ſneers:
That, no word of defence there is left him to ſay,
He, at leaſt, ſhould have written a claſſical play;
From Homer's ſtrong coloring, his characters taken,
Thumb'd o'er Ariſtotle, Locke, Horace, and Bacon:
Or, if thoſe old bucks he had thought too pedantic,
With a Tragical Pantomime, drove ye all frantic.
Should, 'midſt Thunder and Lightning, a Spectre ingulph here;
Made you blind to his faults with the ſmoke of his ſulphur.
Or, as that would be ſtale, he a new trick might ſhew,
And raiſe one in ſteams from the *Waſh-houſe* below.
But, alas! as it is, he muſt run from his poſt—
All his ſpirits are vaniſh'd for want of a ghoſt.

Then

Then I, gently endeav'ring to obviate theſe cavils,
Told him, none of his party delighted in devils.
But he, inattentive to all my fine ſermon,
Sigh'd,——"Fool that I was not to copy the German;
"With their pathos and ſentiment, ſtrain'd ev'ry feeling."
Till you all might have thought there was virtue in ſtealing.
That a wife who has tript's to be valued alone,
As crack'd fiddles, when glued, are improv'd in their tone;
Drawn a libertine youth with ſuch graces, ſuch beauty,
You'd think, filial rebellion was, almoſt, a duty;
Painted ſuicide glorious——and thus, in a trice,
In the language of virtue inculcated vice.
But this had he tried, ſtill his hopes would deceive him,
His audience are all too well taught to believe him.
This he ne'er would attempt,——But, tho' thus far I've got,
I've ne'er ſaid what he has wrote, but what he has not.
Well, the bev'rage, we give for your ſolace this hour,
Is a mixture, like punch, of half ſweet and half ſour;
Of its ſpirit we boaſt not, but hope you may find,
Mongſt our jumble of characters, ſome to your mind.
This I'm order'd to ſay, he endeavour'd to form
One virtuous, but wreck'd by adverſity's ſtorm;
But he cramm'd it ſo brimful of morals and ſorrow,
If you heard all he wrote, you'd not riſe till to'morrow.
So it's ſadly curtail'd, in two ſhort acts compreſs'd,
And he truſts, your good-nature will fancy the reſt.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE TO TON AND ANTIQUITY,

Spoken by MR. LANGLEY, *in the Character of Mr. Mummy,*

January 9, 1799.

T. LANGLEY.

SO ends our frolick; ere the curtains fall
Releaſes you and gives repoſe to all,
Say, ſhall old *Mummius*, no modern friend,
Diſcuſs the dangers which ſuch ſports attend,
And ponder well the ills which may befall
Our party, from this rage Theatrical?
Should, O ye Powers, the learned *Doctor* GARRY,
That deep, profound, ſtupendous antiquary,
Struck with extreme virtù, prove ſuch a queer dog,
To grope for *Deborah* in *Saint Bennet Shearhog*;
To clear his throat and cure his gutt'ral burr,
Should he think fit to eat an Emperor;
Or, crack'd by acting, ſhould he play ſtrange freaks,
And get a knack of ſwallowing antiques——
Or ſhould our active Manager conceive a
Deep-rooted paſſion for the part of *Sheva*,
Turn Jew, quit Oriel, cut all College work,
And cock his noſe up at a loin of pork,
Call bacon eating beaſtly and a crime,
And ſhirk a bit of ham at Luncheon-time,
Why then indeed, poor *Doctor* NICK's undone,
And TOM's, I'll ſwear, no longer Father's ſon,

But

But ſhould the martial habit, the cockade,
The boaſting coxcomb, or Newmarket blade,
Have charms to captivate the youthful mind,
Lead it from path for which it was deſign'd,
Should *Eadburga* forget what has been taught her,
And prove herſelf too much a *modern daughter*,
Then with the learned *Doctor* I'll retreat,
And dig for pavements in the *Watling Street*;
My friends,—if tempted by ſuch dream, I ſee 'em,
I'll run and hide me in the *Hypogeum*,
In whoſe receſſes ſix-foot folks don't venture
And only Five-foots, like myſelf, can enter.